LIVING IN THE AMAZOOGLE WORLD

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Thank you for the invitation to be here with you today. It is truly an honor to be asked to keynote this wonderful event, and I'm looking forward to spending today and tomorrow with you.

Here's how I plan to approach today's comments. I'd like to start with a little historical perspective. Then, I'll introduce you to Jim Collins's latest monograph, followed by some brief discussion of some of the findings from two recent OCLC reports, the Environmental Scan and *Perceptions of Library and Information Resources.* Then a couple of observations, a little more history, and the big finish.

There's an old joke about the cynic who claimed that "history is bunk, the present stinks, and even the future ain't what it used to be." Fortunately, I don't think that's even close to being true. Actually, I think the truth is closer to what William Faulkner wrote in *Requiem for a Nun*: "The past isn't dead. It isn't even past."

So why should I start with a historical Perspective? I don't believe you can talk about the future without understanding a little about the past and the present. Just like a cake is only as good as the ingredients that go into its preparation, our present is the culmination of all our experiences, good and bad, and our future will only be as successful as the steps we take now, both successful and unsuccessful, to ensure that success.

Let me begin by telling you a little bit about my grandfather, Joe Duffy. Joe lived with my family until I was about 10, and he helped develop my love for libraries by taking me to the Watson branch of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library from about the time I could walk.

Like all of us, Joe was a product of his personal history. He was born in Buffalo, New York, on February 19, 1889, of immigrant Irish parents in a working class neighborhood.

The first great financial crisis that rocked his world wasn't the Great Depression, but the Panic of 1893. He was 12 years old when President William McKinley was assassinated only a couple of miles from where he lived.

He was 14 when the Wright Brothers flew at Kitty Hawk and 19 when the first Model T Ford rolled off a Michigan production line. The first presidential candidate he could vote for was

Roosevelt---Theodore Roosevelt---and in the first two presidential elections in which he was eligible to vote, women did not have the franchise. He was 25 when Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on the streets of Sarajevo, precipitating the First World War. He couldn't wait for the US to get into the war, so he crossed the border to enlist in the Canadian Army. According to family legend, this had more to do with him wanting to get away from a bad first marriage than it did with any dislike for Germany or the rest of the Triple Alliance.

He was 31 when KDKA in Pittsburgh became the first commercial radio station in the United States, broadcasting the results of the presidential election that year, and he was 59 when nationwide television networks became a reality. He was 80 when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon in July 1969, and he passed away a few months after this epochal event.

So the explosion of technology and industrialization created and shaped the world which in turn shaped the man who was my grandfather. Libraries and museums were also changing and growing, propelled by those same drivers. It's funny: most of the world seems to think of our institutions as quiet oases of respite from the changes and upheavals in the world, but we all know that we're not something separate or removed from the

world, and that if something affects the rest of the world, it also most assuredly affects libraries and museums.

When Joe was born, Andrew Carnegie was six years into his public library building spree. The American Association of Museums was formed when Joe was 17 years old, in 1906.

Carnegie wanted libraries to be the place where immigrants could learn to be Americans, and throughout the end of the 19th century, and well into the 20th, this was a role that public libraries embraced. During the Great Depression of the 1930's, the unemployed and the underemployed took to their public libraries as a place of shelter and escape during the long, hungry days.

After a period of ennui in the 1940's, public libraries came roaring back during the late 1950's; I'll talk more about that period in a moment. The Library Services Act in 1956 enabled cities and suburbs to build new libraries, and in the passage of time, those libraries introduced new technology such as the online public access catalog and public access computers.

During this period, museums took great leaps forward in becoming more small-d democratic, moving from being seen as elitist institutions to being sources of voluntary education and enlightenment and popular entertainment. Museums also made

great strides in becoming more interactive, allowing guests to have greater control over their own experience of the institution.

Now, we're approaching a different age, an age where collections, technology and professional selection are no longer the value proposition that our institutions offer to our communities. So am I just spouting business babble, or is there some meat here?

Throughout most of history, information was available in limited supplies. Books and journals were expensive. Indexes were complicated, difficult to fathom. Many media, like movies and photographic collections, were extremely rare and expensive.

This was the environment in which the librarians of my generation came of age. We were trained in a librarianship that was all about scarcity, about rationing information, even though we never called it that. Sometimes that rationing was due to budgetary limitations, or to political considerations, or to social mores. Sometimes it was rationing based on our perception of what the users --- or funders --- of our institutions would want.

None of this is applies today. We've moved from a world of information scarcity to one of information ubiquity. And we don't know how to deal with that yet. So how do we determine what we offer to our communities today?

Many of you may be familiar with Jim Collins's book *Good to Great.* It created quite a stir among those who follow the business literature a couple of years ago. He suggested ways that one could take a good business and make it truly spectacular. At the same time, he acknowledged the fact that not every business was going to have the resources or the desire to make that huge leap.

Collins was amazed that at least a third of the people who read his book and were trying to apply his ideas came from the government and not-for-profit sectors. So he wrote a short monograph called *Good to Great and the Social Sectors.*

The subtitle to the monograph sums up Collins's advice: "Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer." Instead, Collins says, "A great organization is one that delivers superior performance and makes a distinctive impact over a long period of time."

Collins then walks the reader through several examples of how these three concepts --- Superior Performance, Distinctive Impact, Enduring Value --- play out in the service sector. He uses the Cleveland Orchestra as one example. He lines out the ways in which the orchestra defined these concepts. For example, to gauge superior performance, some of the measures were: Are we getting more standing ovations? Are we expanding our repertoire, so that we not only play the classics perfectly, but

that we are also adding new works? Are we invited to the most prestigious festivals in Europe? Do composers increasingly ask *us* to introduce their works?

Collins specifically says that one of the reasons business metrics don't work in the service sector is that we try to apply the wrong metrics. In business, he notes, money is both an input and an output. But for social sector operations, money is ONLY an input.

So what does this mean for a library or a museum? Many of the measures the Cleveland Orchestra applied could work for us as well. For examples, are there more positive letters to the editor in the local newspaper about our services? Do artists and collectors think of us as a place to expose their works? Is there increasing demand for the use of our space because it's considered a first class venue?

Now hold this thought for a few minutes while I talk a bit about the reports I mentioned at the opening of these remarks.

A couple of years ago, OCLC released a report called *The 2003 OCLC Environmental Scan: Pattern Recognition.* The report looked at the various changes in the information environment, and identified three major trends in that environment.

The first trend was self-service. People like doing things for themselves online. They think they're pretty good at it. They think they are meeting all their information needs. We now have the ability to pay our bills and trade stocks, buy airline tickets and print our boarding passes, check sports scores and read our hometown newspaper half a world away from home, buy books and videos and download music and TV shows, all in our bunny slippers. Technology has stopped being something external to many of us, and become just a way of doing life. A friend of mine told a story on herself: she pulled up to a gas station and went to put her debit card into the reader. There was a sign that said, "Reader broken, please pay inside." She got back in her car and drove across the street to another station. She was laughing at herself, saying that she had spent some extra valuable time to get the gas just because she wanted the "convenience" of paying at the pump.

It's very important to note here that "self service" does not mean "no service." Instead, library consultant Joan Frye Williams has noted that what we should really be calling this is "self-directed service," service that puts the user at the center of each transaction, not at the end, as an afterthought, as in "end user." In practice, this means that we have to make our services as easy to get to as humanly possible. We have to make our systems intuitive, our buildings inviting, and our rules and procedures non-intrusive and accommodating. This is an area in

which I think the library community could learn much from museums; they have been designed to allow people to have self-directed experiences for years.

The second trend was disaggregation. We see this in the way we get information all the time now. The big packages of information are less and less relevant, except as the source material for pulling out that one nugget you need. Consider the search engine results page: how often do you enter a search term and get exactly what you need from the results page, without ever going to the site itself? When I was planning this talk, and I needed the exact dates of the first Model T and the Library Services Act, I just typed those phrases into a search box on my desk top, and right there on the results pages were the dates I needed. I could see that the sources were legitimate, so I was done. That's disaggregation.

So are the iPod and the iTunes service. These services allow us to purchase just the three songs we wanted from a CD, rather than having to buy all the junk that surrounds it. The new video iPod not only lets us time shift, the way the VCR did, but it also lets us location shift, so we can watch the show wherever we want as well. Amazon recently announced that it's going to let you rent just a couple of pages of text from a book as you need them, rather than buying the whole book that you might never need again.

The final trend was collaboration. None of the things we take so much for granted, either on the web or in our libraries, would be possible without collaboration. Apple licenses content from Disney for the video iPod and from Sony BMG for iTunes. The airlines collaborate with Travelocity and Orbitz to sell their tickets. Libraries around the country collaborate through OCLC and local OCLC networks and the state associations, and regional consortia, and affinity groups like the Oberlin Group or CIC, and a hundred other consortia and associations in order to provide services to end users. And museums share objects and resources around the globe. I was amazed this past year when the Columbus Museum of Art, which is a nice place but hardly the Art Institute of Chicago, was able to mount an exhibition called "Renoir's Women," which featured 39 Renoir paintings from around the world. These priceless pieces were shared from four continents for a four month show in a medium sized city in Middle America. Now that's collaboration.

We are taking steps in this direction. One of the best is the way you are using Arizona's WebJunction as a tool for sharing information among libraries, museums, archives and other organizations. This kind of cross-pollination can only help us improve and strengthen our offerings and our position in our communities.

But that still leaves us with the question: what does the "self-directed, disaggregated, collaborative" cultural heritage organization of the future look like?

In essence, I believe that what it boils down to is creating truly focused organizations. And for this part of my remarks, I'll return to Jim Collins. Collins says there are three intersecting, interlocked circles that require attention in the non-profit sector. These are the things that a leader of any not-for-profit should have a deep understanding of to be an effective leader.

1. **What are you deeply passionate about?**
2. **What can you be the best in the world at?**
3. **What best drives your resource engine?**

First, you have to understand the passion that drives your organization. For many in the library world, it might be connecting people with information, or helping a child develop a lifelong love of learning. For many in the museum world, it might be the joy of fostering greater public understanding of your field, whether that's science or art or history. For archivists, it may be preserving the knowledge record of a parent institution or even of an entire people.

Once you can define what it is you are passionate about, you can start to look at what differentiates your institutions from others

like it, and pour your energy and resources into being the best in the world in that area. Don't waste your time or resources by being a "me too" organization. This may be a place where a business example would work: General Electric under Jack Welch had a simple formula for which lines of business it would enter. If it couldn't be number one or number two in an industry, it didn't want to be in that industry. Now that doesn't mean if you can't be the best public library in the Hennen ratings, you should go out of business. But it does mean that you should find the one thing in your library service that you can be the best in the world at, and do that exquisitely well. Maybe that means representing your community's intellectual heritage on the web, or managing a local history collection better than anyone else. It also means making the hard, and frequently painful decisions about what to stop doing when it's no longer relevant.

For the resource engine, Collins offers a matrix that helps individual organizations see clearly where their primary funding comes from, and thus where their leadership team should be focusing its time. In a political subdivision like a public library that gets most of its revenue from governmental sources, your director and board better have outstanding political skills. In a museum that is attempting to build an endowment, those political skills may be less important that having a network of contacts that can provide entrée to the philanthropic

community. If you have are living on gate revenue, you better have a darn good marketer at the helm.

So, those things being said, where does this leave us? I have a few ideas on this, and as GladysAnn will tell you, I've never been afraid to share my ideas! Most of these ideas revolve around a concept I heard at an OCLC Members Council meeting a couple of years ago. Bruce Newell, from the Montana Library Network, said, "In this world, convenience will always trump quality. So it's our job as librarians to make quality convenient."

We need to unlock our catalogs and collections, to make them readily available to the world.

We need to get the materials that our institutions own free and clear into digitized formats to be visible on the web, especially our special collections that can't be duplicated in any other library or museum.

We need to link our services to the sites where our users are, making it possible for people to find context specific assistance when they are visiting the campus web site, or the school district's site, or the chamber of commerce, and on the web sites of the communities of interest of our special holdings.

We need to make our data worker harder so that our users don't need to. We must be working to make it possible to organize our information more specifically and more automatically.

We need to ensure that once the user finds what she needs, she doesn't have to jump through lots of hoops to get it. No one has to design a user's guide to make it possible for you to get around Google or Amazon or eBay the first time. But there are help links on every page, and many sites that buy or sell have 24-hour service on call.

We also must learn to value our institutions as community centers. There are precious few spots in any community today where people can voluntarily congregate in a non-commercial, non-sectarian setting. Cultural heritage organizations can provide a site for informal learning, for the exchange of ideas on social issues, for the simple act of reflecting, thinking. Omar Wasow, the founder of BlackPlanet.com, and the man who taught Oprah Winfrey how to use e-mail on her show several years ago, says that libraries overvalue their role in "information" and undervalue their role in "transformation." We need to seize upon this, because, unlike the information game, there are precious few institutions other than religious ones that are in the "transformation" game. And *that's* our value proposition, to get back to my business babble of a few minutes ago.

That brings me to another study OCLC has done recently, called *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources.* This report is based on a survey that OCLC created and Harris Interactive carried out. We asked 3300 people in six English speaking countries how they use libraries, how they value the resources that libraries offer, and how they would compare libraries to search engines and book stores. I'm not entirely sure how much of this applies to museums or archives, but perhaps we can discuss this later.

The results of our survey were a mixed bag. On the positive side, three quarters of the US respondents said they hold library cards. And they hold very high opinions of libraries as institutions, and of library staff in general.

On the negative side, there is a huge gap in what libraries offer and what people know about what libraries offer. Many respondents had no awareness of virtual reference, online databases, or even that libraries had web sites!

Libraries offer substantial advantages over book stores, according to our participants. But libraries offer NO advantages to these people over search engines. Search engines are identified with speed, convenience, ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and availability. These are features that are highly

regarded in our society, and this finding needs to be taken very seriously.

We asked people, "Where do you typically begin your search for information on a particular topic?" I don't think it will surprise anyone here that the number one answer was "search engines." The part that *is* rather overwhelming is the percentage of people who said that: 84%.

84%. Let that sink in for a moment. If this room were the entire universe of people who took this survey, then that would mean only the people at this table (*point to one table*) don't start their information search on a search engine. Library web sites were the favored starting point for only 1% of the respondents. Of course, among college students we double those results: 2% of students start at the library web site.

We asked people to give us two positive and two negative associations they have with libraries. This was free text, and most of the respondents participated. We collated the answers into four groups: products and offerings; customer/user service; staff; and facilities/environment.

The good news is that the products and services libraries offer are viewed very positively. But people also are very dissatisfied with the level of customer or user service libraries provide.

Negative comments in this area outnumbered positive ones by a ration of more than 4 to 1.

Despite the fact that they dislike the service we provide, they do like us: comments about staff were about 2 to 1 favorable. But they don't like our facilities. The comments on facilities were about 5 to 2 unfavorable.

And finally from the "Perceptions" report, there's one more statistic that should make all us pause and think about what we are doing. 69% of the respondents, more than 2/3 of this sample, said they feel that there was no difference between the level of trustworthiness in the information derived from search engines and that of libraries.

Considering that libraries as we have known them have been around for more than a century, and search engines are about ten years old, what does this say? I think it says a couple of things:

1) **Libraries have done a poor job of explaining their value to their users. Maybe we don't understand it ourselves. But it is very clear our users don't see it.**
2) **Libraries are not the first place people think of when they think of where to find information. Search engines have**

seized both the confidence and the mind share of our users. We can't change this, and it's not going to go away.

3) So, we need to learn how to do what we do better, and we need to be prepared to let the search engines do what they do better, and we need, as the serenity prayer goes, to have the wisdom to know the difference.

Now, before you begin to consider a lucrative career in the world of taxidermy, let's take another look back for a minute. Call me Pollyanna if you will, but let me explain why I'm optimistic about the future, and to do that, I have to turn to the past again.

Remember earlier I mentioned that the 1940's were a period of ennui for libraries? In 1947, the American Library Association launched a study called "The Public Library Inquiry." Over the next few years, several reports were issued that looked at how people were using libraries and making suggestions for improvement.

In the late 1940's, according to one survey that was commissioned for the Inquiry, only 20% of Americans had library cards. Last month, ALA released the results of a survey it had commissioned by the Gallup organization on public library usage, and discovered that 63% of the adult population had cards. And in our survey, 75% of the respondents held cards. That is a phenomenal turn around.

So what happened in those intervening decades? It's actually pretty simple. One of the questions in that 1940s survey asked, "What would make you want to use a library?" The top answers were: movies; rental films; phonograph records; study groups; and club rooms. Let that sink in for a moment. The users---and the potential users---of libraries were asked what they wanted, and they said: movies, rental films, phonograph records, study groups, club rooms. After a generational change within the leadership of the profession, by the 1960s, libraries were adding all these services. Public libraries began adding popular instead of canonical literature, pop music on records, tapes, and then CDs, videocassettes and DVDs, informal learning programs, and space for community meetings. When the librarians acted on the suggestions of the public, they turned a moribund institution into one that grew in the public's estimation and in usage for four or five decades. As far as I'm concerned, to paraphrase Tom Brokaw, this was the "greatest library generation."

I would submit that what's different between the times of the Public Library Inquiry and today is that we don't have fifty years to make changes. The need for speed has never been greater than it is right now.

There's this company that has a great discovery on its web site. It's kind of buried on the site, but it's one of the things that this company has, in its own words, "found to be true." The

discovery is "Focus on the user and all else will follow." The company is Google. And incidentally, their mission statement is also quite similar to our own: "To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

I opened these remarks by talking about my grandfather, and you might have guessed that I'm going to wrap up by talking about my grandson. Jacob Dylan Callison was born in Columbus, Ohio, on October 8, 1999. He was 23 months old on September 11, 2001. He was three years old when he first asked my wife to "Google Spongebob." She thought he was regressing to baby talk, because, at that point, she had never heard of Spongebob Square Pants, or, for that matter, Google. He was five when hurricanes Katrina and Rita decimated the Gulf Coast. Jake has never known a dial telephone, or a camera that needs film, or a television antenna, or a card catalog (except the one in my living room where we store something else he's never used, audiocassettes).

Although Jake loves the Northwest Branch of the Worthington Public Library that we take him to, I doubt that he'll have the same relationship with reading, information, or learning that we did. His preschool has a computer and a science lab. The various aspects of the culture that are shaping Jake are going to influence the way he thinks about libraries and education for the rest of his life. Everything he is exposed to now will shape

his attitudes and his beliefs. And his generation, not ours, will have the final decision on whether libraries will live or not. He'll vote in his first election in 2017. In other words, there are as many years between today and his first election, as there are between today and the time Netscape introduced its first browser: 11 years.

Jorge Luis Borges once wrote, "Nothing is built on stone; all is built on sand, but we must build as if the sand were stone."

I can't stand here today and tell you with a straight face what the future will be. All I can do is suggest that we contemplate our evolving environment, look beyond the frame of our own education, training, experiences, and preferences, and think about and plan for how those changes will affect our services.

In the best scenario, we can actually affect how that future turns out. In the worst scenario, we simply allow the future to happen to us.

If we don't take responsibility for our future, we could find ourselves pushed into a narrower and narrower niche market, used by fewer people, and marginalized to the point of extinction.

This could still happen, but, as Borges tells us, we must build as if the sand were stone.

Thank you.